

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for configuring a conference among communications devices, the method comprising:
  - querying a platform with conference information
  - 5 for establishing a conference between plural communication devices;
  - providing the conference information to a rules-based engine; and
  - applying rules and communication device data
  - 10 with the rules-based engine to determine one or more communication device configurations for a conference corresponding to the video call information.
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein the communication  
15 device data comprises schedule information for communication devices associated with the one or more conference configurations.
3. The method of Claim 1 wherein the  
20 communications device comprises an audio communications device.
4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the communications device comprises an application sharing  
25 communications device.
5. The method of Claim 1 wherein communications device comprises a streaming communications device.
6. The method of Claim 1 wherein one or more of  
30 the devices comprises a video communications device.
7. The method of Claim 1 wherein the communications device data comprises bandwidth associated  
35 with one or more communications devices.

8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:  
determining plural communication device  
configurations for a conference corresponding to the  
conference information;

5 selecting one of the communication device  
configurations based on one or more predetermined  
optimization factors; and

scheduling the communication devices associated  
with the optimal communications device configuration for  
10 accomplishing the conference call.

9. The method of Claim 8 wherein the optimization  
factors comprise the cost associated with the  
communications device configurations.

15

10. The method of Claim 9 wherein the optimization  
factors comprise the reliability associated with the  
communications device configurations.

20 11. The method of Claim 1 further comprising  
updating the communications device data to reflect  
changes in the status of the communications devices.

12. The method of Claim 1 wherein a rule comprises  
25 that conference information having a request for a video  
conference will have an audio conference configured with  
audio communications devices if video communications  
devices are unavailable to support the requested video  
conference.

30

13. The method of Claim 1 wherein a rule comprises  
that conference information having a request for  
application sharing communications devices will require a  
conference with audio or video communications devices.

35

14. The method of Claim 1 wherein a rule comprises that a conference not exceed predetermined resource consumption without an approval code.

5        15. The method of Claim 1 wherein a rule comprises that predetermined users are permitted access to a predetermined communications device.

10       16. The method of Claim 1 wherein a rule comprises that a communications device configuration have access codes for each communications device of a conference that dials into the conference in order to authenticate all inbound callers.

17. A system for configuring a conference between plural communications devices, the system comprising:  
a query engine that accepts conference information associated with a scheduling request for  
5 communications devices;  
a communication device database that stores data associated with communications devices;  
a rules database that stores rules associated with the configuration of conferences with the  
10 communication devices; and  
a configuration engine interfaced with the query engine, the device database and the rules database, the configuration engine applying the conference information, the communication device data and the rules  
15 to determine one or more communication device configurations for the conference.

18. The system of Claim 17 further comprising an update engine interfaced with the communication device  
20 database, the update engine maintaining device data to reflect changes in the status of communication devices.

19. The system of Claim 17 further comprising an optimization engine operable to select one of the  
25 communication device configurations based on predetermined optimization factors.

20. The system of Claim 17 wherein the configuration engine is operable to select one of the  
30 communication device configurations and schedule the associated communication devices for accomplishing the conference.

21. The system of Claim 20 further comprising an  
35 optimization engine associated with the configuration engine, the optimization engine operable to optimize the

communication device schedules according to predetermined optimization factors.

22. The system of Claim 17 wherein the  
5 configuration engine is further operable to provide a user with the plural configurations and accept a configuration selection by the user for scheduling a conference.

10 23. The system of Claim 17 wherein the communication devices comprise audio devices.

24. The system of Claim 17 wherein the  
15 communication devices comprise application sharing devices.

25. The system of Claim 17 wherein the communication devices comprise video devices.

20 26. The system of Claim 17 wherein the communication devices comprise streaming devices.

27. The system of Claim 17 wherein the scheduling request comprises a request for a conference by video  
25 devices and the configuration engine is further operable to schedule audio devices if video devices are unavailable.

28. The system of Claim 17 wherein the rules  
30 comprise access control rules that restrict one or more predetermined communication devices by one or more access control factors.

29. A system for managing communications devices,  
the system comprising:

a configuration rules module having configuration  
rules for interfacing the communication devices;

5 an access control rules module having access control  
rules for restricting access to predetermined  
communication devices according to predetermined  
conditions;

a scheduling rules module having scheduling rules  
10 for scheduling communication devices for conferences; and

a rules-based engine operable to accept requests for  
a conference with communication devices and to apply the  
configuration, scheduling and access rules to configure  
and schedule the conference.

15

30. The system of Claim 29 wherein the  
communications devices comprise video, audio and  
application sharing devices.

20 31. The system of Claim 29 wherein a configuration  
rule comprises that a MCU is required for video  
conferences between three or more video communication  
devices.

25 32. The system of Claim 29 wherein a scheduling  
rule comprises that a first set of predetermined  
communications devices have priority over a second set of  
communications devices.

30 33. The system of Claim 32 wherein the first set of  
communications devices comprise devices internal to a  
business and the second set of communications devices  
comprise devices associated with a service provider  
external to the business.

35

34. The system of Claim 29 wherein an access control rule comprises that a conference configure as a dial-out conference in which a bridge communications device calls endpoint communications devices.

5

35. The system of Claim 29 wherein an access control rule comprises that a conference configured as a dial-in conference require an access code for in-bound callers.

10

36. The system of Claim 29 wherein an access control rule comprises that only a predetermined set of individuals may use a predetermined communications device function.

15

37. The system of Claim 36 wherein the predetermined communications device function comprises communication in excess of a predetermined bandwidth allocation.

20

38. The system of Claim 36 wherein the set of individuals comprise individual associated with a geographic location and the communications device function comprises access to a communications device at the geographic location.

25